

ALTERNATIVE FUELS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION DIVISION

**PROPANE ALTERNATIVE FUELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

November 1, 2006

**Minutes**

**Members Present:** Paul Biney, Jacinto (Jay) Briseno, Dennis Dukes [for Mr. Strmiska], Tom Granberry, John Kelly [for Mr. Byers], Skeeter LaDue, Don Lewis, Richard Maier, Doug Peck, Gregg Radley, Lorraine Urey, James Williams

**Members Absent:** James Cole, Douglas Garrett, Johnny Greenwood, Jan Peterson, Shel Vedlitz

**Guests:** Marco Cruz, Anna May Etheredge, Jana Granberry

**Staff:** Heather Ball, Rayfield Hearne, Steve Jaeger, Dan Kelly, Eileen Latham, Carmen Ledesma, Thomas Petru

Division Director Dan Kelly called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Railroad Commission's Alternative Fuels Training Center, 6506 Bolm Road, Austin.

Dan congratulated all the new members on their appointments and thanked them for agreeing to serve. He asked for nominations for chairman and vice-chairman. The committee elected Jacinto (Jay) Briseno chairman and James Williams vice-chairman. Mr. Briseno assumed the chair.

On motion of Ms. Urey (second by Mr. Peck), the minutes of the August 9, 2006, meeting were approved without amendment.

**Director's Report**

Dan gave the "AFRED 101" orientation presentation for the new committee members. The presentation covers the division's history, programs, organization, funding, budget and goals.

**Marketing/Public Education**

Marketing and Public Education Director Heather Ball reviewed her section's 2007 work plan. A handout outlining the goals, objective and strategies was given to the members for review and comments.

Heather asked for volunteers to work the booth at the upcoming Sunbelt Builders Show on November 16-18 in Grapevine. South Texas and west Texas marketers are all invited to attend the next two 6.1 Regulatory Compliance for Managers classes, which are scheduled to be held November 7th in Harlingen and November 9th in San Angelo. These classes will be in the same format as the very successful 6.1 class held in Austin in September. AFRED has already scheduled next year's 6.1 class in

Austin, which will be combined with the Fourth Annual Texas Propane Technology Forum in Austin as a two-day event on September 12-13, 2007.

Homebuilder outreach. Ms. Urey updated the committee on AFRED's Homebuilder Outreach program. This year's training seminars for builders will focus on rebates and tax credits and make builders more aware of propane's benefits as an alternative fuel. Propane ties into the builders' "green building" programs; a link is available for more information on this. Next year's seminar series will continue the sponsored lunch format that AFRED used last year to demonstrate new propane technologies in conjunction with the local homebuilder associations' seminars around the state. Heather invited members to attend the Sunbelt Builders Show and the gala Star Award program, which will honor award-winning propane homebuilders.

2007 LIHEAP program. Marco Cruz with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' Energy Assistance Section explained plans for this year's federal Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program. Since 1982 LIHEAP has had grant funds available to help low-income families pay their heating and cooling bills and replace or repair lines and equipment. The funds are distributed through local agencies. A list of these agencies is available at [www.tdhca.state.tx.us](http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us). Both arrears and current bills may qualify, up to \$1,200 per household. Emergency deliveries of 100 gallons per household are allowed, and yearly maximums are set for households depending on their income. Priority is for the elderly, handicapped and families with children under 6 years old.

Propane marketers must have a current vendor agreement on file with the administering agency in each county where they serve eligible customers. Marketers should contact agencies to ensure their vendor agreements are on file and current.

Federal motor-fuel tax credit. Heather explained the new federal \$0.50/gallon motor-fuel tax credit that took effect October 1. Her presentation covered eligibility, who claims the credit, what records are needed, how to register with IRS, what to do to claim the refund, and the new proposed tax law changes. The program covers on- and off-highway motor vehicles, including forklifts, but not lawn mowers or tractors. AFRED will continue to post the most recent information about the credit, including sample Internal Revenue Service registration and claims forms, on its web site at [www.propane.tx.gov](http://www.propane.tx.gov).

Consumer rebates. Rebate coordinator Eileen Latham distributed fiscal 2006 and 2007 rebate statistics.

## **Research/Technical Services**

Research and Technical Services Director Steve Jaeger updated the committee on current R&D projects.

Residential dehumidifier. Units are installed in Pinehurst and New Caney as part of AFRED's PERC-funded demonstration project. The third unit is in Cortland, New York, undergoing performance testing by Intertek-ESL. The tests are being observed by engineering staff from Southwest Research Institute. Current plans are to install this unit in a third demonstration site in Texas when testing is complete. Performance test results will be available around mid-winter.

Cotton defoliator. Tests with a two-row unit took place in Weslaco in mid-summer as part of AFRED's Environmental Protection Agency-funded project. Samples of fiber were sent to a laboratory for analysis. A six-row unit is still under construction in California. AFRED plans to submit a proposal to EPA to conduct additional tests next summer.

Forklift retrofit fuel systems. Emissions tests of an ECS retrofit fuel system installed on a General Motors 4.3L V-6 engine have been conducted at Carnot Emissions Services in San Antonio. The results are excellent, and California Air Resources Board verification of the ECS system appears likely. Verification would be followed by commercial availability of the system in Texas and inclusion in AFRED's Forklift Initiative Program, which is funded by a grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. AFRED is looking for other manufacturers of low-NOx retrofit fuel systems to test for CARB verification purposes.

Organic vegetable production. DelMonte is using flame cultivation in its organic vegetable operations in south Texas. AFRED is monitoring the project for the PERC Agriculture Advisory Committee and providing technical assistance.

Generator. Steve invited the committee to view a demonstration of the Manchester 10-kW propane-fueled generator outside the meeting room. The generator is wired into the customer's home and starts up immediately if the grid power goes out.

Training. Director of Training Thomas Petru reported that in fiscal 2006 AFRED held 290 classes and trained 3,073 individuals. Fiscal 2007 classes began with the highly successful 6.1 Regulatory Compliance for Managers class in Austin on September 7, which 90 people attended. The new format for this class includes presenters from the Railroad Commission's AFRED and Safety Divisions, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of State Health Services and other agencies of interest to propane company owners and executives.

Qualifying exams. Certification Manager Rayfield Hearne reported that in fiscal 2006 AFRED gave 3,197 LP-gas qualifying exams. Of those, 92 percent passed and 8 percent failed. Exams given at Bolm Road made up 40 percent of the total; 60 percent of the exams were taken outside of Austin.

AFRED is continuing to review the question banks for all categories of examinations. New, detailed study guides for all seven employee-level examinations are being prepared. A draft sample of the new study guides will be provided at next meeting. When the guides are published, AFRED plans to return employee-level exams back to a closed-book format.

Rayfield reported that the pilot program requiring registration in advance for exams given outside of Austin is going well. No serious problems have been encountered. The purpose of the pre-registration requirement is to avoid unnecessary travel costs and permit AFRED to notify examinees in advance of any changes in the out-of-Austin exam schedule.

Exam renewals. The 2007 exam renewal letters will be sent out on or before March 1, 2007. Renewals will be due by May 31, as usual. Ray suggested that marketers include their license numbers on their check in case it becomes separated from their letter during processing.

### **Next Meeting; Adjournment**

No date was set for the next meeting. The committee adjourned at 12:13 p.m.



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Carmen Ledesma